

NO BOOK NO LITTER



## To Begin With

I started this project because I wanted something Kamachi Kazuma-y other than novels now that I have a webpage of my own.

I'm guessing the people who visited the site for a specific author rather than Dengeki Bunko as a whole or a specific series might want to know the structure that I use. And I guess that means I really am obsessed with novels. If I'm going to talk about anything, it's going to be novels.

This is what I came up with when I was gathering my opinions and thoughts on various novels.

This will be fairly focused on actual technique, but before getting to that, there is of course the more emotional side of wanting to write a certain story or wanting to have a certain character go on a rampage. But if I started passionately discussing that portion based in "love", I doubt I could continue writing coherently, so I'm going to focus on what I can actually put to words.

If you get a cold impression from all this, I apologize.

Also, I will be listing out my ideas on the ideal way to create a story, so my actual works won't always reflect this. Sometimes it's necessary to break the basic rules once you've gotten a firm grasp on them.

Not only is this for people who want to know my structure for writing, but you might be find it useful if you want to write a novel or if you've thought about it but don't know where to start.

But if you're using this as reference for your own work, let me give a quick word of warning.

What I am about to reveal is only what I've decided is the right answer for myself. I believe there is no absolute correct answer when it comes to writing a

novel.

So while you're perfectly welcome to use this advice, please don't just accept it as the absolute truth.

I hope you can peer in at it like it's a junk shop, dig out what you think you can use, and absorb those as your own skills.

This could also help you figure out what not to do. If you find yourself saying you're different or that you'd do it some other way, I think that can lead to a new form of originality.

When you get down to it, this is an old methodology, so it could also be useful in deciding the different direction you want to go in.

Lastly, I think the biggest hurdles toward writing a novel are not being embarrassed and not assuming you're bad at it.

You can take this advice or disparage it, I don't care which. Use it however you want as long as it gives you the chance you need to overcome those hurdles.

Now, then. If you want to know my structure, if you're interested in writing a novel, or if you're just trying to kill some time, I hope this will be useful to as many people as possible.

## Before Writing Even the First Letter

If you've never written anything before, then before even getting to the methods for writing, you might be wondering how someone can come up with a story that fills 300-400 pages.

However, I don't think there's anything special there. It isn't like a fully-developed story just drops into my head.

It may be better to say I come up with a character, a line, a weapon, or a scene, and other small "points" and then fill in the surrounding elements to give form to the full novel.

So whether you're a professional, an amateur, a liberal arts type, or a science type, my theory is that everyone comes up with the ideas needed for a novel.

The difference between the professional and the amateur is what you do with these small ideas you come up with on a daily basis. Do you record them so you won't forget them (record, not remember) and do you prepare those ideas to the point that a third party (i.e. the readers) can understand them?

If you're going to turn those small ideas and opinions into "points" for your story, you need to connect them into a "line". You need to list them out equally so they flow together into a story.

I'm sure this differs from person to person, but in my case, I think I connect 10-30 of those "points" into a "line".

So if you want to write a novel, the first step is to store up those ideas that come to you one moment and you forget a moment later.

However, that doesn't require any major preparation.

You can get by with a notebook or your cellphone's memo function. You just need something you can pull out to jot down the ideas whenever they come to

you.

Simply write down a list of those ideas as they come to you. Don't focus on "screening" the ideas based on whether they're especially cool or novel. You can decide whether they'll be any use later on.

In my case, it's like this:

### Plant Tanker

To avoid soaking fruit in preservative, a large-scale plant factory is built inside to transport the fruits and vegetables while they're still alive.

However, this increases the risk of unwanted introduced species being carried in.

### Bullet Sigil

Using the ricocheting of a bullet to draw a sigil to use magic.

As I'm sure you can see, this is completely worthless information that doesn't connect to a story at all. But if you build up ten or twenty of them and link them together, you can create a setting with some more depth to it.

So at this stage, it's important to not worry about the ideas. Don't think about whether they're embarrassing. Just use some medium outside your head to save every idea or bud of an idea that comes to mind.

The human mind is far more forgetful than we like to think. Especially when it comes to information unrelated to your actual life, just like with dreams. You might be confident you can remember these things, but you need to assume your memory is not so reliable. The first step is to work at efficiently picking up all the daily ideas that float to the surface of your mind and then pop.

By the way, Dengeki Bunko-style stories tend to mock these kinds of notes as an embarrassing part of your past. I hate to say that I can think of a few

examples of doing that in my own works. But there's no reason to be embarrassed about it in the real world.

For example, comedians have a notebook of gags and magicians have a notebook of tricks. Those are a product of their blood and sweat, so it isn't something you can mock them for. And since the items in the notebook are only in the preparatory stage, they don't all have to be perfect 100s. They're ideas, not finished products after all. If other professions do it, then it makes no sense to say authors can't.

And if you have some time, it's convenient to periodically transfer that list of ideas to a computer's word processor or some other medium that you can perform a keyword search on.

This is especially true for handwritten notes.

If you do that, you can avoid losing track of an idea and thus defeating the entire point of the notes.

When typing up the text for searching, you can make it all the more convenient by adding genres to the end of each one like fantasy, mecha, creature, person, weapon, accessory, *etc.*

Do that and when you want three small fry characters to be defeated, you can make a quick search for "person" instead of looking through the long file manually. And speaking from personal experience, it might not seem like a big deal at first, but once the number of entries passes 100 or even 1000, that small bit of preparation can save you a significant amount of time.

## Connecting the Points with a Line

This is for when you have stocked up a certain amount of “points”.

I think it depends on what kind of story you want to write, but as you build up your ideas on a daily basis, you should naturally end up with an order of priority.

When you line up Idea A and Idea B, you really don't want to get rid of Idea B.

You want Idea B to be in the center.

You want to make a story out of it.

If you start feeling like that, then it's time to move onto the next step. At this point too, you need to transfer your thoughts into external data instead of just thinking in your head.

It can be digital or analog, but I feel like I can gather the information better when I actually move my hands. That means I use a notebook or loose leaf paper and a mechanical pencil.

For example, if I wanted to write a battle novel with an Oni theme...

Oni

As a Youkai?

Just as a monster? Or as an invisible phenomenon?

A world where physical and living Oni confront digital and internet phenomena Oni?

Just like that, write down everything that the term brings to mind and you can draw out ideas you never would have thought of otherwise.

Another useful technique is to place the first character, setting, world, scene, or line of dialogue you wanted to write in that novel and then add in other words around that.

It's hard to describe, so here's an example.

Write the word "Oni" at the center of a notebook page or piece of loose leaf paper and then add other words that come to mind around it:

The real world coexists with a Japanese-style virtual reality

Creatures and data Modern setting? Fantasy setting?

Just a type of animal? Oni Who is the enemy to be defeated?

Who is the protagonist? Who is the heroine?

Monstrous strength and one of many skills Every character has a different skill

Make old stories into something a lot cooler Maybe some that possess people?

The information will grow like that. By placing the term you consider to be most important in the center, you can naturally come up with a setting or story that will always make people think of the word "oni" no matter what part of the world they look at. This will make sure you do not gradually stray from what you wanted to convey to the readers.

You should notice this when you actually try it out, but you will come up with terms and connections between terms you never expected to find in your mind. You'll realize just how little you can trust your own mind to have it all put together without some help.

And since the point of this is to draw out all the ideas hidden in your mind, there is no real reason to think for five or ten minutes on each one you write down. It should be most effective if you leave judging the ideas until later and just link together as many "points" as you can come up with.

And there's no real reason to stick to paper for this.

As long as you,

1. Transfer the data out of your mind.

2. Keep writing things down like a game of word association to find the ideas you wouldn't have noticed normally.

then anything should work. I just personally feel like it's easier to make associations when handwriting things instead of using my computer's word processor or my cellphone's notebook. Maybe this would have the same effect when studying kanji or English vocabulary.

While you could begin writing with just these notes, you can also put together a plot if you want to make things a little cleaner.

## Let's Put Together a Plot

Now it's time for the plot.

This step finally looks like actual writing and that means we're at the point where someone else might actually see it.

That said, a plot is not absolutely necessary when writing a story. In my case, I submitted a plot for *A Certain Magical Index*, but I wrote *Heavy Object* without coming up with a plot. So this part is completely unnecessary for stories that don't require it.

I'm going to be writing this assuming that you will be writing one.

I think there are three main benefits of writing a plot:

1. The author can share the information in their head with others.
2. The author has a backup to make sure they don't forget that information.
3. They can use it for reference if they want to change the story partway through.

Just to write something, that first benefit may be unnecessary. It's really only needed to show your editor so they will give you the green light.

The second and third benefits are pretty important. The second one makes sure you don't forget anything about the setting or about the foreshadowing you've set up. The third comes in handy when you think of a neat way of changing the story partway through but it ends up not working out very well. You would be in trouble if you wanted to change things back but didn't have anything to reference.

Writing a novel is a long process that takes more than a month. If you assume

you can remember everything from the beginning at the end, it can come back to bite you.

And there are two downsides to writing a plot:

1. The plot adds to the work and can wear you out.
2. It gets in the way of the kind of adlibbing that lets the characters take on a life of their own.

The first defeats the entire point and even I will sometimes feel satisfied or burnt out after only writing the plot. I have a few dozen “new novels” stuffed into my plot folder. If you want to try writing a novel, but you end up burning out like that, writing a plot might just not be for you and maybe you should try writing the novel without a plot.

The second doesn't happen often, but when you end up with some characters or situations that are really easy to write, the characters can start doing things not even the author expected. This is mostly a product of coincidence, so it's more like mixing together a bunch of drinks for fun than it is making a cocktail based on a proper recipe. In other words, you can do whatever you want in the novel if you don't write a plot.

But if you want to start by mastering the basics, I think it would be best to learn how to write a plot and only cut out that work later if you decide it isn't necessary. Writing novels is mostly something you teach yourself, so any habits you pick up can stick with you for a long time.

I think what makes up a plot differs a lot from author to author, but in my case, I divide it up into title, theme, characters, setting, time period, terminology, and summary.

I will go over each of those in more detail later, so let's start by discussing the plot as a whole.

I think the plot is necessary to gather all the information in your head and

make sure nothing is missing in the setting or the story. Converting your ideas to text and submitting it to your editor all starts from here.

Basically, this is taking a closer look to make sure you really do understand it all in your head.

And this means you don't have to write down anything that you don't need to check over.

For example, when writing out the terminology, you don't have to write a full dictionary of 200 or 300 original terms. You just need the bare minimum of important terms needed to explain the story.

In my case, I think it's usually less than ten.

That doesn't mean there is only ten terms' worth of information in the whole book. That's just all I need to explain what kind of story I want to write. It might be similar to the landmarks used to guide someone over the phone when they're walking around town for the first time. There is a lot there (intersections, cellphone towers, parks, statues, etc.), but if you only tell them about the major landmarks, your explanation will more smoothly bring you to a shared understanding.

As I said, there is no point if you are satisfied with just the plot and burn out there, so it's actually most important to shorten the process so it doesn't wear you out.

The plot has more to it than the list of notes, but what matters is bringing it to the point that you can remember what you wanted to write (or explain it to someone else), not writing out every little thing.

The time to write every little thing is of course when you're making the completed manuscript

## Let's Decide on a Title

Now I think I will explain each of the entries in the plot: title, theme, characters, setting/time period, terminology, and summary.

First is the title.

If you're wondering why you would worry over a title before writing anything else, you can ignore this one. This is for the people who feel 'You've gotta have a title even if it's only tentative! How can you start without a title!?' To be honest, I'm one of those people. ...There's no real logic behind it, but I feel like I only allot my work time and mental resources once I come up with a title. Even I find it strange, but I doubt I could write anything if I was just working on File 1 or Novel 2.

What is needed in a title is not for the title itself to be interesting. It needs to make people think the contents of the novel will be interesting. Those sound similar, but they are actually completely different.

On the other hand, if it's something you have to read or try out to understand why it's so good, you're saying no one will ever understand why it's good without reading it which means you will never get any new readers while the current readers gradually leave.

The ideal is to have a title that even people who haven't read it are familiar with and think is pretty well-known. After all, everyone wants their novel to be popular and for their series to last as long as possible.

So instead of making something that only people in the know will enjoy, I think it's important to make something that people will reach for even if they know nothing about it.

And the first step there is the title.

With that said, I'll break down the conditions of what I think makes a good title:

1. Gives a general sense of what genre it is.
2. Doesn't use any difficult words but lines up words in a somewhat hard-to-read way.
3. Has katakana in it somewhere.

The first can be good or bad depending on the genre, but it might be best to think of it like a permanent marker. If you had no idea what thickness and color all the pens lined up on the store shelf were, you wouldn't even know where to start. If you give the novel a title that gives a hint of the genre and type of story, it's like indicating the ink color on the cap and numerically writing out the thickness on the side of the pen. That avoids the problem where someone wanted a red pen but got a yellow one.

By adding in the genre, setting, world, and maybe even the heroine's name, you can give off a sense of the information in the actual novel yet without giving any complete information. So instead of the title itself being interesting, you've made a title that makes the contents sound interesting.

The second might be most evident in *A Certain Magical Index* and *The Unexplored Summon://Blood-Sign*. If the title is too easy to read, people might skim right past it. So to stop and hold the reader's eye, you can make a portion of the title difficult to read. (On that front, *Heavy Object*'s title might actually be a little dangerous...) But if you make it too hard to read, they won't be able to read it at all, so be careful.

Using kanji is one way of doing that, but you might also be able to increase or decrease the length of the title beyond a certain point.

By the way, when adding a special furigana to your title, the unwritten rule is to not put that furigana on the very first word. If you did that, it would be ambiguous where it went in aiueo order.

For the third, I haven't actually taken any statistics, but I have a feeling the Japanese really like foreign words in katakana. I wasn't really trying to do it at the time, but looking back, almost all of my novels have them in the title.

And it's not as important, but you can write down the chapter titles.

For these, I focus on making them look nice when lined up on the table of contents.

For example, if you have four chapters, you could put the characters for the four cardinal directions in the titles. And if you have seven chapters, you could give each one the element corresponding to a day of the week.

Unlike the novel title, chapter titles are not directly linked to popularity, so it shouldn't be a problem at all if you don't bother writing them here. ...But in my case, I get more excited when I write the chapter titles in advance too.

For reference, this is how I do the chapter titles for my novels:

Chapter 1: I'd Even Take Help From a Cat – Cat\_or\_Dog\_Fight.

(A Certain Magical Index. Short Japanese text + Short English text. I try to keep the same number of characters in the Japanese part for each chapter.)

Chapter 1: Is There a Girl in a Swimsuit Anywhere Around Here? >> Struggle in the Oceania District

(Heavy Object. Short Japanese Text + Battlefield location)

Chapter 1: The Grim Reaper is Coming@Jinnai Shinobu

(The Zashiki Warashi of Intellectual Village. Short Japanese text + POV character)

(Stage 01 Open 04/01 00:00)

## Stage 01 Please Tell Me This is an April Fool's Joke

“Now, brother.”

“Kill me if you can.”

(The Unexplored Summon://Blood-Sign. Primarily a short Japanese text, but with the chapter's starting time and some symbolic dialogue to draw you in.)

I mostly just do it however I want, but I focus on matching my image of the series. With Heavy Object, I emphasize the location because the battlefield changes each time. With The Zashiki Warashi of Intellectual Village, I write out the POV character because the first person POV character changes each time.

The most meaningful aspect of the table of contents is preparing people to read the main text more smoothly. Not only does it provide the page numbers, but I think it can be a useful place to write down some convenient preparatory information.

One thing it can do is build up some expectation and excitement before they even start reading, so maybe it's something like the opening act that warms up the audience for the main act during a live comedian performance.

## Let's Decide on a Theme

A novel's theme may sound like a tricky thing, but it only means the general theme you want as the central pillar of your story. Maybe you thought, "Eh? I just want to have the protagonist flirting with girls a whole bunch. I don't want anything on a grand scale like world peace or saving mankind", but don't worry. That just means your theme is "flirting with girls".

I think there are a few ways of doing this:

1. Pointing to it with the novel's overall world.
2. Pointing to it with the protagonist's beliefs.
3. Pointing to it with the incident caused by the final boss.

If you've decided on a theme in advance, you can avoid straying from your initial plans, such as starting as a battle story but all of a sudden finding it's a horror story or finding the protagonist who should have been paired with his childhood friend is going after the young dorm manager instead.

Now, a theme doesn't have to be especially difficult or complex. In fact, I think you can make something deeper and easier to understand if you take a simple question everyone asks and then expand on it or broadly interpret it.

For example, it can be something as close to home and lukewarm as "I know there are people who like blogs and SNSs, but what is it that drives people to search out material for posts because they feel they have to, not because they want to?"

If you expand on that like a snowball rolling down a hill and make it an ideology that could bring about the end of the world, you might be able to come up with something deep yet understandable.

Or take the "flirting with girls" I mentioned as a joke earlier. If you wanted to,

you could rearrange that into “every girl on the planet wants to marry the protagonist (or the final boss), so no one else will have any descendants and the world will end”.

And once you choose a theme, you need to decide whether your protagonist will support it or oppose it.

Simply put, you have two options:

1. The protagonist’s beliefs are the novel’s theme.
2. The novel’s theme is some unreasonable death game or social system and the protagonist is the one that defeats it.

The novel’s theme and protagonist’s beliefs do not need to match up.

They can either be the same or the opposite and both can be interesting in their own way.

But don’t give your protagonist some vague, unrelated beliefs. If you move toward either extreme (approval or rejection), then you can avoid the problem of having your protagonist drifting away from the novel’s worldview.

Just because there is a single theme doesn’t mean every single character has to be in agreement in whether they approve of or reject that theme. Just like some people like dogs, some like cats, and some don’t like dogs but don’t particularly like cats either, every character should have their own thoughts on the issue.

Once you’ve gotten all that settled, you can create a single core to your story by deciding what the protagonist will decide in the end.

## Let's Decide on the Characters

This will be based on making characters for a battle story. There should be a different method if it's a horror, suspense, or romance story, but I think I'll write this based on the method I'm most used to.

First up is the protagonist.

For the protagonist, you first need to think about what your readers' main demographic will be. If that's middle and high school boys, then the most straightforward and effective choice is to make the protagonist a middle or high school boy.

Of course, there are times when they won't be in middle or high school, such as when it's a story about knights in a fantasy world.

In that case, you need to focus on giving them values that middle and high school boys will understand.

For example, in a fantasy world of swords and magic, you can make the protagonist boy be more worried about what the girls around him think of him than about his activities as a knight. You can also give him an entrance exam to get into the knights that's a lot like a high school or college entrance exam.

I think it's important to make your protagonist's driving force a simple "desire" but to remove any rawness from that desire.

You might be wondering if Kamijou Touma from Index has any desires. His driving force is wanting to save any girl he sees crying in front of him, which you can also see as the extremely simple desire to see those girls smile.

Quenser from Heavy Object is a lot more straightforward with his desire to be rich. That might make him sound like an unpleasant person, but that raw impression is closed off by never getting into what he wants to do once he's rich

since he has more important things to worry about.

(For your big evil boss, you actually do want to get into those raw desires of what to they'll do after conquering the world. That will make it all the more clear that he has to be defeated right away.)

It can be anything, even wanting to get along with girls or wanting attention on a video site. The closer that desire is to your reader's lives, the more they can identify with it.

A protagonist that your readers can understand but can't identify with is a bit of a tough sell. That's why a good shortcut to success might be focusing on enlarging some smaller close-to-home idea to make a unique characteristic.

For example, "working to get along with a girl and accidentally saving the world in the process" is a way of creating a protagonist that everyone can identify with but does things no one can do.

If you're giving your protagonist magic, a superpower, or a weapon, it's important to know what that protagonist wants to do.

Giving them a Japanese sword or a gigantic revolver might look cool, but if their objective is to save rampaging monster girls, then that weapon is more than they need. On the other hand, if your protagonist is intent on slaughtering an entire clan for revenge, then don't just give them their fists as a weapon. Who knows how many times they would have to punch someone to kill them.

This should be easier to understand if you compare Kamijou Touma's Imagine Breaker with Quenser's explosives.

(You can however get around this by giving them a Japanese sword that can easily slice through steel yet have them restrict themselves to only using the back of the sword.)

I also think it's easier to make a story if your protagonist is specialized on a single point.

That creates more openings and allows them to get into binds more easily... but more importantly, having them cleverly using their limited number of cards

to escape that bind can show just how much they love that weapon, how much they rely on it, and how thoroughly they've studied it.

If you are going to give them a large number of weapons, you might be able to give them a single item that manages them all. Something like a book that summons a thousand different beasts. Even if they summon something different each time, their love for the book becomes more evident each time.

When creating a protagonist, you can also prepare a standard value based on positive and negative traits.

Think of where the majority of your expected readers fall as a 0 and the maximum value being 100. Then you decide where your protagonist falls on the point scale. (By adding up their scores for upbringing, intelligence, sports, finances, social skills, special powers, etc.)

The standard would be to place your protagonist at a -5 or -10.

They may be amazing in battles or in their beliefs, but they're poor, they're unlucky, they have trouble with girls, and they're dumb. With all that, they end up even lower than the readers.

However, there are times when you can put your protagonist at a +100. Think of a detective in a mystery novel or a samurai in a period drama.

If you start at 0 and add positives and negatives from there, you can avoid straying from what you wanted in their characterization. For example, you might have intended to make a protagonist at a -10, but they end up straying from that because you gave them too many positives like "great at sports" and "always being pampered by five beautiful maids".

As for the name, I think it's safest to give your protagonist an easy to read one. After all, that's the name that will appear the most in the text.

Now for the heroine.

When coming up with a heroine (or the main male character if you have a

female protagonist), I think it's best to draw on your own idea of an ideal member of the opposite sex. Hmm, but that's an emotional thing, so there isn't much to say from a technical aspect.

But instead of just using that, I'll introduce another technique you can use.

First, picture that ideal member of the opposite sex. This is the most delicate part of people's hearts, so some of you might want to alter them a little bit. But let's harden our hearts and list out some terms. For example, black hair, long hair, large breasts, a baggy sweater, kind, older, can do housework, *etc.*

Once you've done that, give each female character in the novel one of those traits.

If you simply had your ideal member of the opposite sex appear, you might find yourself supporting that character too much and never giving the other characters any scenes. That can be a lot of trouble when this character is a sub heroine instead of the main heroine.

To avoid this emotional issue, you separate out those ideal traits and give them to multiple characters. That way every character is given an equal chance to show up (because the author is attached to them all).

When creating the heroine's personality, the simplest thing is to give them a single weakness. Think of a heroine that is well-behaved, beautiful, intelligent, and unmatched in battle, but they just can't seem to read a map.

Unlike the other characters, you generally want the heroine to be attractive and difficult for the readers to dislike, but go too far with that and they start seeming like a mannequin. To avoid that but not destroy that "ideal" side of them, you intentionally give them "just one" weakness.

You can also give your heroine a "desire" like you did with the protagonist, but I think it's best to choose something simple and charming like hunger or sleepiness.

This will be advice more for beginners, but speech patterns are a shortcut to

showing individuality.

Even when using the same polite speech, you can make characters speak more casually, more bluntly, or more cold and inhuman like an ATM or train announcement.

If you settle on a speech pattern that fits their personality and position, then you should be able to come up with a different style for everyone.

And if you do have multiple characters in the same novel that speak a lot alike, you should try to avoid having a scene where they all meet.

As long as they aren't in the same place, similar speech patterns shouldn't be too confusing.

And Japanese is a truly excellent language, so you can always change their first person pronoun as a last resort.

Whether it's *watashi*, *atashi*, *boku*, *washi*, *warawa*, or the character's name, that too can provide some individuality.

I can't guarantee how well that will work if they release a version translated into a foreign language, though.

Finally, the enemy character.

For an enemy character, start by deciding on what they specialize in and how they will fight the protagonist. After that, you can come up with a name, an appearance, a personality, and a power. So if they're a witch, you can give them a magic wand.

Unlike the protagonist and the heroine, you don't need to make the readers like them, so it shouldn't be a problem if you make them look or act strange.

One thing to keep in mind is that a lame enemy will just drag down your protagonist and make them look lame too.

You might not be motivated because you hate them and you may get lazy because you just want to write about the protagonist and heroine flirting, but you need to focus on giving the enemy plenty of details in order to make your protagonist stand out.

The enemy's beliefs should be the opposite of the protagonist's and it doesn't need to be something the readers can identify with. I suppose it's important to make it something the reader will understand but will be unable to accept.

That's why I often take a close-to-home problem everyone has, expand on that a whole bunch and have them lose sight of their original goal as they try to solve it.

For example, killing half of the earth's population to bring an end to global warming.

You can also help people identify with the enemy by giving them a smaller reason behind their grand plan, such as a personal tragedy.

But it's meaningless if their big reason and small reason aren't connected at all.

It's important for solving the big reason to also solve the small reason.

Incidentally, it can be more exciting on the protagonist side if they're the reverse and they end up solving the big reason by solving the small reason. For example, saving the heroine ends up avoiding a war.

When giving an enemy magic or special powers, I like going with something that's partially but not entirely hidden.

They may look invincible and unbeatable when they first show up, but it later turns out that there's a weakness if you look at it from a different angle. And it's especially perfect if that weakness is something that only works with the protagonist's special skill.

For example, say the enemy uses grenades with incredible firepower. No one can get close, but the electricity-controlling protagonist can zap the explosives to detonate them in the enemy's hands.

Also, you can make characterization even more obvious by deciding on a main color. Think of Index's white habit or the Zashiki Warashi's red yukata.

But this works against you if the character's image and the coloring are at odds.

If you can't come up with a color, you can rely on a book about color control or color conditioning. That's the field that paints the conductor's cabin of a train a light blue because it reduces weariness. Colors give people different images and there are specialists who research these things, so relying on their help can be a nice shortcut. If those specialized books are too expensive, then check at your local library.

And there's one other thing to watch out for.

You can't rely on white or black.

Not that they don't pack a punch. They are both powerful colors. However, the secondary color can entirely change the impression of those two colors.

Take the main color of black for example:

1. Black + Yellow: Warning colors of bees or spiders.
2. Black + Sky Blue: High voltage sparks.
3. Black + Red: Demonic motif.

So when using white or black as the main color, it's safest to take another step and decide what to use as a secondary color as well.

Another additional note:

This is more or less cheating, but you can use a montage method to mechanically create a character.

Get some of those handwritten vocabulary cards used for English class. You know, those ones held together by a metal ring. Prepare a few of sets of those and make a category out of each one:

Hairstyle (Short, long, ponytail, twintail, etc.)

Age (From 0-100)

Height (Tall, normal, short, etc.)

Body Type (Large breasts, normal, flat chest, *etc.* To be more specific, you can break it down into all of their measurements.)

Personality (Cheerful, ladylike, boyish, diligent, etc.)

Studies (Liberal arts, science, cultural, athletic, teacher's pet, delinquent, etc.)

Clothing (Sailor uniform, blazer, track suit, kimono, dress, *etc.* Create a separate category for weapons if necessary.)

Main Color (White, red, blue, black, etc.)

Line up all the categories, flip through each one, and combine the results into a character.

However you do it, it might be easier to picture if you use something outside your mind and move your hands around.

Of course, this is only a last resort and I don't recommend it very much. It's hard to feel very attached to a mechanically created character. But if you're in a complete slump and can't come up with a single character, if you need to come up with a few dozen unimportant characters for a single novel, or if you otherwise don't have any mental resources leftover, it wouldn't hurt to remember this.

For character names, make the protagonist's simple and put more work into the heroine's and enemy's. There are a number of different patterns:

A Simple Surname + A Complicated Given Name

Something like Inoue Tsurara (井上氷柱) or Tanaka Marika (田中真理佳) It starts out easy to read, but you get stuck partway through. That keeps your eye on it and it leaves a larger impression. At the same time, people won't reject it

quite as much as something that throws in the tricky kanji from the beginning. If it's too much trouble, they can just shorten it to Inoue-san and Tanaka-san.

### Focused on Their Power or Traits

Something like Hisaka Rensuke (火坂煉助) or Chinen Souji (知念操次). The first would have a fire ability and the second would have a mental ability, so you add in kanji that hint at that. This is especially useful for enemy characters.

### Take a Common Name But Swap Out the Kanji

Something like Nakamura Ichirou (中村壹郎) or Suzuki Kyouko (鈴木狂子). They both started as perfectly normal names, but they use different kanji. They're spelled differently but they're pronounced the same, so people will accept them surprisingly readily.

But this doesn't work if the framework of the original name is completely lost. Spell Suzuki Kyouko as 錫機饗弧 and that original form is nowhere to be found.

When building up a stockpile of characters, you need to find the format that suits you best.

That could be a TRPG character sheet, a fighting game character form, an online game character creation screen, a TCG card, or for a more recent example, a card from a social game. There are plenty of preexisting formats for putting together a large number of characters, so if you use the one that interests you, you won't have any trouble creating a protagonist, a boss, and three other characters if that's what you think you need.

The important thing here is to avoid choosing a format that's a pain and takes a lot of effort, no matter how enjoyable it might be.